

# State of Wisconsin\Government Accountability Board

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**DATE:** January 4, 2012

**TO:** Wisconsin Municipal Clerks  
City of Milwaukee Election Commission  
Wisconsin County Clerks  
Milwaukee County Elections Commission

**FROM:** Nathaniel E. Robinson  
Elections Division Administrator  
Government Accountability Board

**SUBJECT:** Changes to the Duration of Military and Overseas Electors' Absentee Ballot Requests

Wisconsin 2011 Act 75 made changes to the duration of military and overseas electors' absentee ballot requests. A military elector may no longer receive absentee ballots permanently. Instead a military elector may request absentee ballots for all elections only within the calendar year in which the request was made.

In addition, overseas electors' absentee applications are no longer valid for all elections within two successive general election cycles. Now, overseas absentee ballot requests are good only for the calendar year in which the request was made. Military and overseas electors may request ballots for a shorter time frame, for example one or more elections during a calendar year, but their requests for absentee ballots are not valid for longer than the calendar year.

## 2012 Implementation

Currently, valid military absentee requests should be treated as valid requests through the end of 2012. After 2012, Military electors will have to reapply to receive absentee ballots for elections beginning in 2013. All new military absentee requests will only be valid for the calendar year in which they were made. Clerks should include the attached letter or similarly worded correspondence, and an absentee ballot application (GAB-121) in the absentee ballot to military electors for the August 2012 Partisan Primary and the November 2012 General Election to inform them of the change.

## Summary:

1. Current military electors must continue to receive absentee ballots through 2012, even if they have not returned absentee ballots or if their absentee ballots have been returned by the post office as undeliverable.
2. Military electors may continue to request absentee ballots for one or more specified elections but the longest a military absentee ballot request is good for is one year.

3. Overseas electors who have an absentee application that was valid for 2010 and 2012 should be sent a federal-only absentee ballot in 2012. Overseas electors should be informed that they must reapply yearly when an absentee ballot is sent to them.

Clerks may customized and use the attached letter to inform their overseas electors of this change. Clerks should include the attached letter or similarly worded correspondence and an absentee ballot application (GAB-121) in the absentee ballot to overseas electors for the August 2012 Partisan Primary and the November 2012 General Election to inform them of the change.

### Frequently Asked Questions

*Do I need to notify my military electors of this new “1-year” application requirement?*

Yes. Please send the attached letter or similarly worded correspondence with all military electors’ absentee ballots in the partisan primary and general election in 2012.

*Are Overseas applications still good for the next two general elections?*

No. The duration of absentee ballot request for overseas electors has changed also. An overseas elector’s absentee application is valid for all elections within the calendar year in which the request was made. An overseas elector may request ballots for a shorter time frame, for example one or more elections during a calendar year, but their requests for absentee ballots are not valid for longer than the calendar year.

*If a military voter doesn’t return a ballot in April, do I have to send ballots in August and November?*

Yes. A military elector must continue to receive absentee ballot throughout the calendar year in which the request was made. They cannot be removed from the absentee list for failing to return a ballot. The only reason a clerk may remove a military elector from the absentee list within the year of the request is if the elector is no longer in the military, no longer resides in the municipality, or the elector asks not to receive any more absentee ballots.

*Must I track my military electors in SVRS for all elections or just general elections?*

All military electors’ absentee ballots must be tracked in SVRS for all elections. Clerks who rely on the county or another municipality to use SVRS on their behalf must be in communication regarding their military electors. Clerks must track when an absentee ballot was sent, how it was sent, and when it was returned. Overseas electors must be tracked for all elections with a federal contest on the ballot.

*If I cancel my military (or overseas) absentee, does that automatically remove the “Military” notation from the voter record in SVRS?*

No. Cancelling a military or overseas absentee application in SVRS does NOT automatically remove the “Military” or “Overseas” notation from their voter record. Clerks must open the voter record of the elector and remove the “Military” or “Overseas” notation separately.